

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 MC-02 ACDA-07 PRS-01

TRSE-00 OMB-01 IGA-02 L-03 H-01 EB-07 /080 W

-----084671 250612Z /12

R 241026Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2456

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC

JCS

COMIDEASTFOR

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CSAF

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 6494

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PK, US

SUBJECT: MILITARY REACTION TO A-7 TURNDOWN

BEGIN SUMMARY: PAK MILITARY REACTION TO THE USG DECISION TO TURN DOWN PAKISTAN'S REQUEST FOR A-7S HAS BEEN MUTED. A VARIETY OF REASONS, SOME CONTRADICTORY, FOR THE TURNDOWN ARE MENTIONED. THE GOP HAS NOT MADE AN EFFORT TO EXPLAIN THE REAL REASONS TO ITS MILITARY, AND SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS DO NOT APPEAR TO FULLY UNDERSTAND THE GLOBAL NATURE OF OUR NEW ARMS POLICY AND SPECIFICALLY ITS APPLICATION TO PAKISTAN. WE CONTINUE TO CLARIFY OUR POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON PAKISTAN'S DEFENSE NEEDS WHEN WE MEET PAK MILITARY OFFICERS. FOLLOWING THE US DECISION THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE HAS BEEN GIVING SERIOUS

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CONSIDERATION TO ALTERNATIVES TO THE A-7, INCLUDING THE FRENCH MIRAGE. END SUMMARY.

1. PAK MILITARY REACTION TO THE USG DECISION TO TURN DOWN PAKISTAN'S REQUEST FOR A-7S HAS BEEN MUTED. IN CONTACTS EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE HAD WITH SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS, THE LATTER HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT

OVER THE DECISION BUT ALSO INDICATED THEY WERE NOT SURPRISED. THE FEW MILITARY OFFICERS AND SENIOR MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OFFICIALS WHO HAVE RAISED THE ISSUE WITH US DO NOT SEEM TO UNDERSTAND FULLY THE USG'S NEW ARMS TRANSFER POLICY AND HOW IT APPLIES TO PAKISTAN AND FEEL THAT THE TURNDOWN WAS DIRECTED TO PAKISTAN ALONE. ONE MISCONCEPTION WE HAVE HEARD REGARDING THE DECISION IS THAT THE US UNILATERALLY ABROGATED AN AGREEMENT ALLEGEDLY REACHED IN AUGUST 1976 DURING KISSINGER'S VISIT, FOR THE SALE OF THE AIRCRAFT.

2. ALTHOUGH THE RESPONSE TO THE TURNDOWN HAS BEEN UNEXCEPTIONAL, OFFICERS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN LIST A VARIETY OF REASONS, SOME CONTRADICTORY, WHY THE USG DID NOT APPROVE THE SALE. MANY OFFICERS THINK THE TURNDOWN WAS DUE TO THE US NOT FULLY UNDERSTANDING OR APPRECIATING PAKISTAN'S LEGITIMATE DEFENSE NEEDS. THIS GROUP DOES NOT UNDERWAND THE GLOBAL NATURE OF OUR NEW ARMS POLICY AND SPECIFICALLY ITS APPLICATION TO PAKISTAN. WE HAVE HEARD THAT SOME OFFICERS SUSPECT THE US WILL ALSO TURN DOWN THE GOP'S REQUEST FOR F-5E'S AND OTHER MODERN COMBAT AIRCRAFT AS A RESULT OF THE NEW POLICY. OTHERS BELIEVE THAT THE USG DECISION WAS TAKEN IN RETALIATION FOR BHUTTO'S ACCUSATIONS OF US INTERFERENCE IN PAKISTAN.

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3. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD SOME OFFICERS EXPRESS THE BELIEF THAT THE REQUEST FOR A-7'S WAS UNREALISTIC IN THE FIRST INSTANCE AND IN FACT IS ONLY A GOP BARGAINING PLOY TO OBTAIN MAXIMUM BENEFITS IN EXCHANGE FOR CANCELLING THE PURCHASE OF A REPROCESSING PLANT. THOSE SUBSCRIBING TO THIS VIEW BELIEVE THAT SINCE THE US HAS TURNED DOWN THE REQUEST FOR A-7'S, THE US WILL FEEL AN OBLIGATION TO MEET PAKISTAN'S REQUEST FOR SOME OTHER ADVANCED AIRCRAFT. STILL OTHERS BELIEVE THE GOP COULD NOT HAVE AFFORDED THE \$700 MILLION OUTLAY FOR THE PURCHASE AND WERE RELIEVED THE SALE DID NOT GO THROUGH FORCING PAKISTAN TO ADMIT IT HAD NO FUNDS TO PURCHASE THE AIRCRAFT.

4. ONE FACT STANDS OUT PROMINENTLY FROM THIS MASS OF SPECULATION AND CONJECTURE - THAT THE GOP HAS NOT MADE A CONCERTED EFFORT TO EXPLAIN THE REAL REASONS FOR THE

TURNDOWN TO ITS MILITARY. WE HAVE STRONGLY SUSPECTED, BASED ON OUR TALKS WITH MILITARY OFFICERS, THAT THE GOP HAS SUPPLIED THE MILITARY WITH NEITHER INFORMATION ON OUR NEW ARMS SALES POLICY NOR THE SPECIFIC REASONS WE

LAQN THE GOP FOR THE TURNDOWN. WE ASSUME THIS TACTIC IS A RESULT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S ATTEMPT TO IMPLICATE THE US IN EFFORTS TO OVERTHROW HIM AND HIS CONSEQUENT DESIRE TO HAVE NEGATIVE INTERPRETATIONS PUT ON THE A-7 TURNDOWN. CONSEQUENTLY, WHEN WE MEET PAK MILITARY OFFDCERS WE TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY, IN A LOW-KEY MANNER, TO CLARIFY OUR ARMS SALES POLICY. WE SPECIFICALLY ATTEMPT TO ENSURE THAT PAK MILITARY OFFICERS UNDERSTAND HOW THE NEW POLICY APPLIES TO PAKISTAN AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR A FUTURE MILITARY SALES RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES. ON AIRCRAFT, WHEN ASKED WE REITERATE OUR POSITION THAT WE WOULD BE WILLING TO CONSIDER THE SALE OF COMBAT AIRCRAFT OTHER THAN THE A-7.

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5. ONE OF THE REASONS FOR THE MILITARY'S MUTED AND GENERALLY UNEMOTIONAL RESPONSE IS THAT THE FORMAL

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REQUEST HAD BEEN PENDING FOR ONE YEAR, ALTHOUGH EMBASSY
WAS AWARE OF THEIR DESIRES FOR THE A-7 FOR AT LEAST ONE
YEAR PRIOR TO THE REQUEST, AND THERE WAS A GROWING
FEELING AMONG SENIOR OFFICERS THAT THE LONGER THE DECISION
WAS DELAYED THE GREATER THE LIKELIHOOD OF A TURNDOWN.
IN ADDITION MANY PAKISTANIS FELT THAT WITH PRESIDENT
CARTER'S VICTORY IN NOVEMBER, THE NEW ADMINISTRATION
WOULD BE LESS SYMPATHETIC THAN THE PREVIOUS ONE TO
PAKISTAN'S MILITARY REQUIREMENTS. THIS ATTITUDE IS
BASED ON MANY PAKISTANIS' PRECONCEPTION THAT DEMOCRATIC
ADMINISTRATIONS ARE HISTORICALLY MORE FAVORABLY DISPOSED
TOWARDS INDIA THAN PAKISTAN.

6. ONE SURPRISING DEVELOPMENT RESULTING FROM THE U.S.
DECISION ON THE PROPOSED SALE HAS BEEN THE CHANGE IN
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ATTITUDE OF THE CHIEF OF AIR STAFF, ZULFIQAR ALI KHAN,
REGARDING THE TYPE OF AIRCRAFT BEST SUITED TO THE PAF'S
NEEDS. WHILE THE A-7 WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION THE AIR CHIEF
HAD DOWNPLAYED THE NEED FOR AN AIRCRAFT WITH HIGH
SURVIVABILITY. HOWEVER, IN A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH
ODRP, AFTER THE TURNDOWN HAD BEEN ANNOUNCED, THE
AIR CHIEF MARSHAL STRESSED THE PAF'S NEED FOR AN AIRCRAFT
WITH A GOOD SELF-DEFENSE CAPABILITY.

7. FOLLOWING THE U.S. DECISION ON PAKISTAN'S REQUEST,
WE UNDERSTAND THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE HAS BEEN GIVING
SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO ALTERNATIVES TO THE A-7, INCLUDING
THE MIRAGE. WE KNOW THAT BOTH WITHIN THE PAF AND DEFENSE
MINISTRY THERE ARE THOSE WHO FAVOR PURCHASING FROM THE
FRENCH WHILE OTHERS STILL FAVOR A U.S. PLANE. THE PAF
CHIEF MENTIONED TO ODRP THAT HE WOULD CONSIDER THE
F-5E IF IT WERE ARMED WITH AIM-9L MISSILES WHICH HE
FEELS ARE NECESSARY TO OFFSET THE ADVANTAGES INDIAN MIG-21'S
HAVE OVER THE F-5E. IN A CONVERSATION ODRP HAD WITH
MASOOD HASSAN, SECRETARYN DEFENSE PRODUCTION, MASOOD
IMPLED THAT PAKISTAN DID NOT WANT TO PUT ALL ITS EGGS
IN ONE BASKET AND WAS IN THE PROCESS OF LOOKING AT AIRCRAFT
FROM OTHER COUNTRIES. THE SECRETARY DID NOT MENTION ANY
SPECIFIC AIRCRAFT. ODRP AND DEFATT REPORT THAT SINCE
THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE TURNDOWN THE FRENCH HAVE BEEN
ACTIVELY MEETING WITH DEFENSE MINISTRY OFFICIALS AND WE
ASSUME ARE PRESSING THE PAKS TO LOOK AT THE MIRAGE AS
A REPLACEMENT FOR THE PAF'S AGING F-86 AND B-57 FLEET.

8. IF THE GOP CAN FIND THE NECESSARY FUNDING, IT MAY
CONSIDER THE PURCHASE OF BOTH THE MIRAGE AND THE F-5E.

THE SALES ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE AND THE PAF-WHEN
THE A-7 SALE WAS A POSSIBILITY-TALKED IN GENERAL TERMS
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ABOUT THE NEED FOR A COMBAT AIRCRAFT TO PROTECT THE A-7.
THERFORE, IT THE GOP DOES PURCHASE THE MIRAGE, IT MAY
STILL BE INTERESTED IN THE F-5E AS WELL AS A FIGHTER-
INTERCEPTOR AND AS PROTECTION FOR THE MIRAGE USED AS A
FIGHTER-BOMBER.

9. ON THE BASIS OF OUR ADMITEDLY LIMITED CONTACTS WITH
MILITARY OFFICERS ON THE A-7 TURNDOWN, WE ARE LEFT WITH
THE IMPRESSION THAT OUR ACTION GENERALLY DID NOT LEAVE
A RESIDUE OF ILL WILL OR MISTRUST ON THE PART OF THE
MILITARY. ALTHOUGH SOME ARE UNDOUBTEDLY DISAPPOINTED,
OTHERS SEE OUR DECISION AS PROOF OF THE NEED TO DIVERSIFY
PAKISTAN'S SOURCES FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT. MANY OTHERS
SEE OUR ACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POLITICAL RELATIONS
BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES AND VIEW IT AS UNDERSTANDABLE
IN LIGHT OF THE PM'S ATTACKS ON THE U.S. MOST MILITARY
OFFICERS STILL BELIEVE THAT IN TERMS OF PRICE, MAINTENANCE
AND PRODUCT RELIABILITY IT IS IN PAKISTAN'S INTEREST TO
PURCHASE U.S. ARMS.

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Message Attributes

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